

Introductory Pāḷi Course

by

Ven Digana Sugatavaṃsa

Lesson 1

01 April 2014

What is Pāḷi?

*Sā māgadhī mūlabhāsā,
narā yāyādikappikā;
brahmāno ca'ssutālāpā,
sambuddhā cāpi bhāsare*

What is Pāḷi?

Māgadhī

- Pāḷi is the Magadha language

mūlabhāsā

- it is the very first language in the world.

*Narāya +
ādikappikā*

- The language spoken by human beings in the beginning of a world cycle

Brahmāno

- It is the language for communication in the Brahma realm.

*Ca +
assutālāpā*

- For a new born who has not heard or learned any languages before, the first words spoken are in Pāḷi.

*sambuddhā
cāpi
bhāsare*

- (Most importantly) Pāḷi is the language spoken by all the Sammāsambuddhas

The Importance of Learning Pāḷi

*Yo niruttiṃ na jānāti,
jānāti piṭakattayaṃ;
pade pade vikañkheyya,
vane andha gajo viya.*

The Importance of Learning Pāli

*Yo niruttiṃ na
jānāti,
jānāti
piṭakattayaṃ;*

- For one who does not know the grammar of the Pāli language, though he knows the whole Tipiṭaka;

*pade pade
vikaṅkheyya,
vane andha gajo
viya.*

- Word by word, he will doubt the real meaning, whether the word is a noun or a verb, etc. Just like a blind elephant roaming dangerously in the forest, many accidents lie waiting along the path.

Similarly, if we study the Tipiṭaka without understanding Pāli grammar, we will face many doubts and difficulties in grasping the true teachings of the Buddha.

Pāḷi

atthaṃ pāṭi rakkhātīti pāḷi

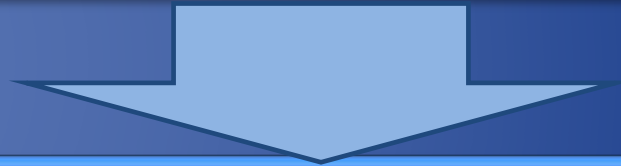
meaning fall to protect from

- Pāḷi (mūla) originally referred to the Lord Buddha's teachings.
- Hence to study Pāḷi means to study the teachings of the Buddha, the Tipiṭaka.
- In order to **protect** the **true meanings** of the Buddha's teachings, to **prevent it from falling away**, we need to know Pāḷi.

Pāḷi

During the Buddha's Time...

“Pāḷi “ referred to the Teachings of the Buddha
The language used was called “Māgadhi”



After the Mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha,
as the Teachings of the Buddha spread to
other countries...

“Pāḷi “ also referred to the language used for
recording the Buddha's Teachings

Understanding Pāḷi

- In these foreign countries like Sri Lanka, the Theravadin Teachings were passed down
 - in the original language
 - without any alteration
 - In order to
 - understand the true Teachings of the Buddha
 - Preserve the Buddhasasana
- ➔ Different scholars/mahatheras wrote books detailing the Pali grammar

Understanding Pāḷi

Pāḷi Grammar Books/Systems

```
graph LR; A[Pāḷi Grammar Books/Systems] --- B[Kaccāyana (Sri Lanka)]; A --- C[Moggallāyana (Sri Lanka)]; A --- D[Saddanīti (Myanmar)];
```

Kaccāyana

(Sri Lanka)

- Most widely studied and applied today

Moggallāyana

(Sri Lanka)

Saddanīti

(Myanmar)

Understanding Pāḷi

Kaccāyana

(Sri Lanka)

- Most widely studied and applied today

Pāḷi Grammar Books/Systems

This is what this
course will follow

The Pāḷi Alphabet (akkhara)

What is the Alphabet (akkhara)?

na khayam̐ gacchatīti akkharā

not destroyed going to be

- It is not going to be destroyed – this is the Alphabet
- The things we are using now will be destroyed over time, but the Alphabets can continue to be used through time.

The Pāḷi Alphabet (akkhara) 字母表

Kaccāyana System

41 letters 字母

8 vowels 元音
(*Sara*)

33 consonants 子音
(*Vyañjana/Byañjana*)

What is a vowel (sara)?

Sayaṃ rājentīti sarā

by itself bright/illuminate

- Without the support of others, vowels can be pronounced by themselves. Like a King who is able to illuminate his nation

Byañjane sarāpentīti sarā

consonants able to maintain

- Without the support of vowels, consonants cannot be pronounced on their own. Just as a sick person needs to be supported. Vowels can maintain the consonants, like a King can maintain his ministers and people.

The Pāḷi vowel (sara) 巴利元音

Kaccāyana System

8 vowels 元音 (Sara)

5 long vowels
(Dīgha sara)

ā, ī, ū, e, o

3 short vowels
(Rassa sara)

a, i, u

Short & Long Vowel

Short (*rassa*)

Short vowels: **a, i, u**

e & o

- before double consonants
- before conjunct consonants

One finger snap duration

One eye-blink duration

A long syllable is exactly equal to two short syllables in duration

Long (*dīgha*)

Long vowels: **ā, ī, ū, e*, o***

e & o

long in all other cases:

- before single consonant
- at end of word

Two finger snaps duration

Two eye-blinks duration

Pronouncing “e” and “o”

Case		Example Words	
		e	o
Short	before double (same) consonants	<i>khettam</i> (paddy field)	<i>koṭṭeti</i> (to chop)
	before conjunct (combine 2 different) consonants	<i>ettha</i> (here)	<i>oṭṭho</i> (camel)
Long	before single consonant	<i>evam</i> (thus)	<i>osadha</i> (medicine)
	at end of word	<i>dhamme</i> (in the dhamma)	<i>buddho</i> (the enlightenment)

The Pāḷi Consonants

(Vyañjana/Byañjana) 巴利子音

Consonants
子音 (vyañjana /
byañjana)

**Non-grouped
(Avagga)**

7 consonants:
y, r, l, v, s, g, !

**Grouped
(Vagga)**

25 consonants in 5 groups

**Pure Nasal
(niggahīta)**

ṁ

The Pāḷi Consonants

(Vyañjana/Byañjana) 巴利子音

Grouped (Vagga)	kavagga	k, kh, g, gh, ṇ	ka-group
	cavagga	c, ch, j, jh, ñ	ca-group
	ṭavagga	ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ	ṭa-group
	tavagga	t, th, d, dh, n	ta-group
	pavagga	p, ph, b, bh, m	pa-group
Non-grouped	avagga	y, r, l, v, s, h, ḷ	no group
Pure Nasal	niggahīta	ṁ	pure nasal

The Pāḷi Consonants

(Vyañjana/Byañjana) 巴利子音

Consonants cannot be pronounced on their own - need to be combined with at least a vowel, e.g.



k + a = ka

k + u = ku

k + ā = kā

k + ū = kū

k + i = ki

k + e = ke

k + ī = kī

k + o = ko

Pāḷi Pronunciation

Division by Articulation

The Pāḷi Alphabet

Place of
articulation/
formation
发音处 (ṭhāna)

Guttarals; Palatals;
Cerebrals/Linguals;
Dentals; Labials

Manner of
articulation/
utterances
发音方式 (payatana)

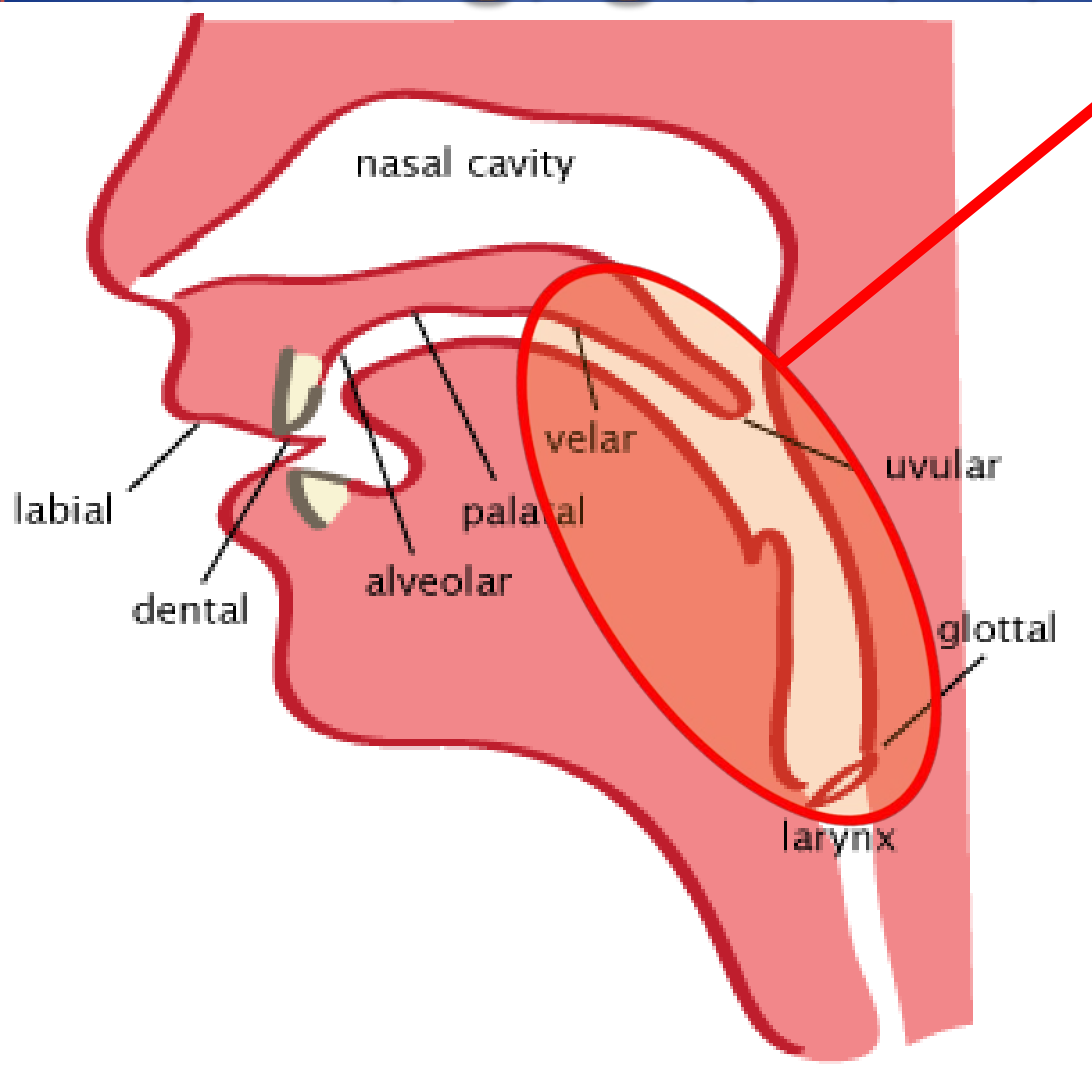
Non-aspirated,
Aspirated; Nasal

Division by Place of Articulation

Place of articulation 发音部位 (<i>ṭhāna</i>)	Letters
Gutturals 喉音 (<i>kaṇṭhaja</i>)	k, kh, g, gh, ṅ, h, a, ā
Palatals 口盖音 (<i>tāluja</i>)	c, ch, j, jh, ñ, y, i, ī
Cerebrals 反舌音 (<i>muddhaja</i>)	ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ, r, ḷ
Dentals 齿音 (<i>dantaja</i>)	t, th, d, dh, n, l, s
Labials 唇音 (<i>oṭṭhaja</i>)	p, ph, b, bh, m, v, u, ū
Combination	e, o, v, ṁ

Gutturals 喉音 (kaṇṭhaja)

k, kh, g, gh, ṅ, h, a, ā

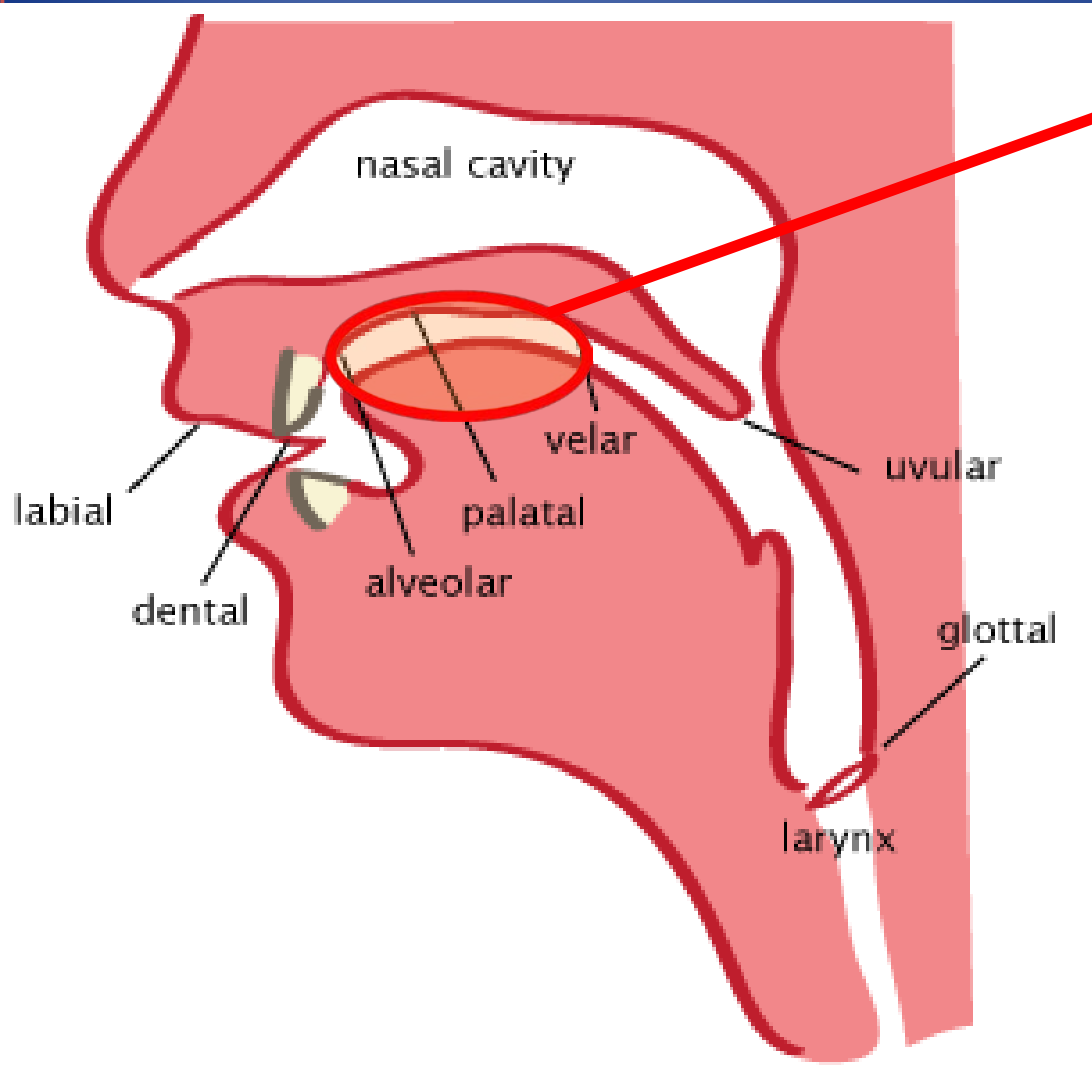


- **Guttural** speech sounds are those with a primary place of articulation near the **back of the oral cavity**

- This includes the velar, uvular and glottal speech sounds

Palatals 口盖音 (tāluja)

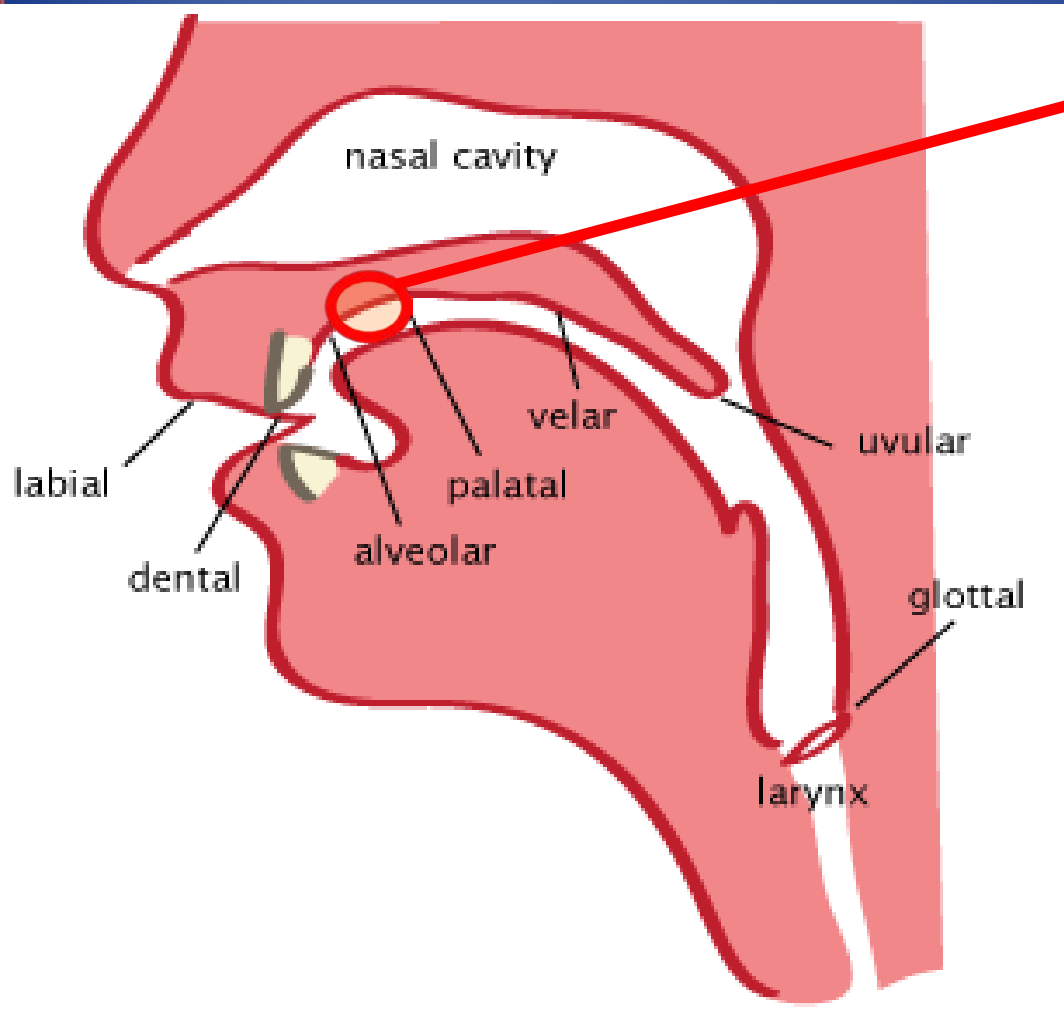
c, ch, j, jh, ñ, y, i, ī



Palatal speech sounds are articulated with the body of the tongue raised against the hard **palate** (the middle part of the roof of the mouth)

Cerebrals 反舌音

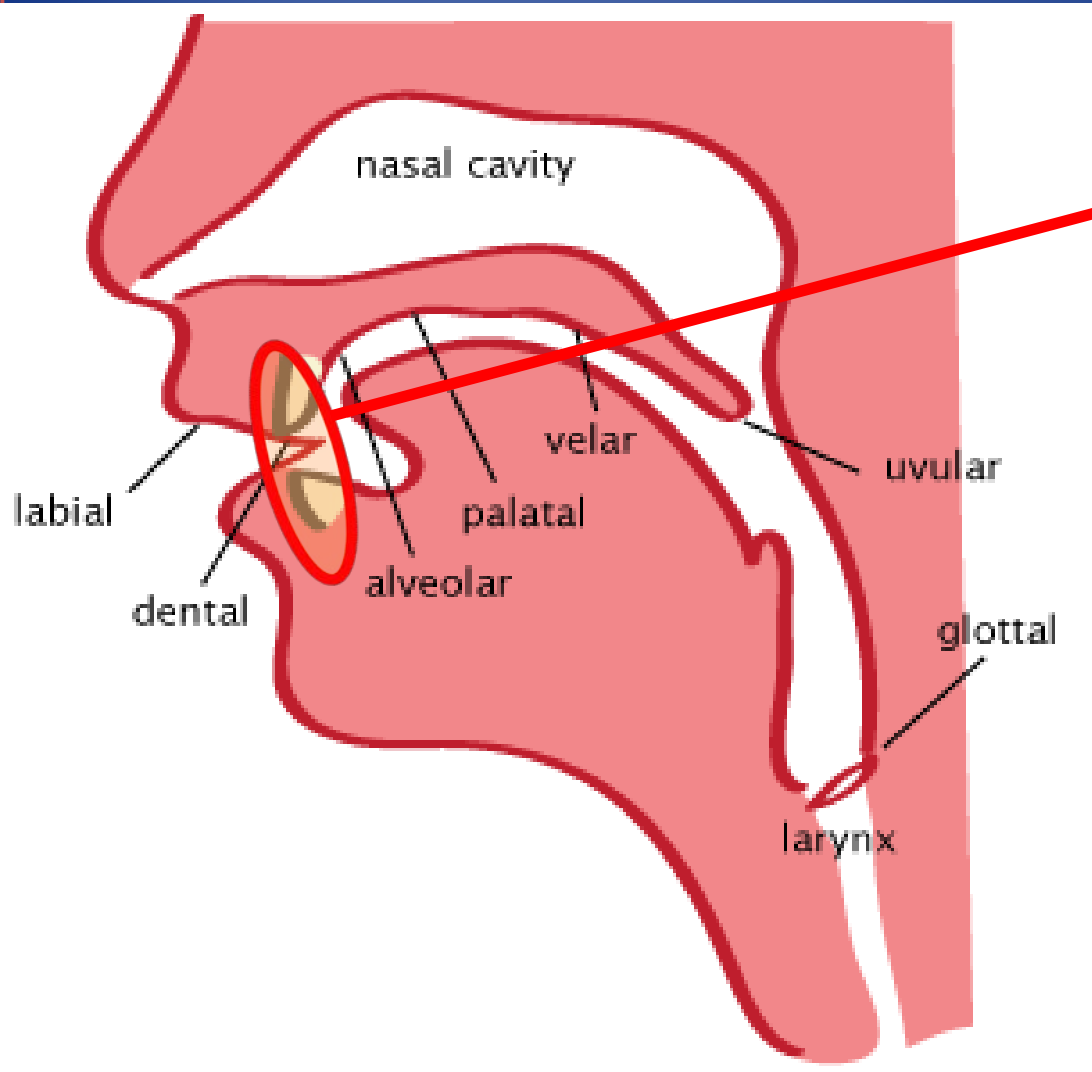
(muddhaja) ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ, r, !



Cerebrals are pronounced with the **tip of the tongue** rather **further behind the teeth** than in the English t and d, giving a somewhat hollow sound (this is the most characteristic sound of Indian languages)

Dentals 齿音 (dantaja)

t, th, d, dh, n, l, s



Dentals are pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the very tips of the teeth

Special Notes

ṭavagga

ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ṇa

- tongue touching inside ceiling of mouth

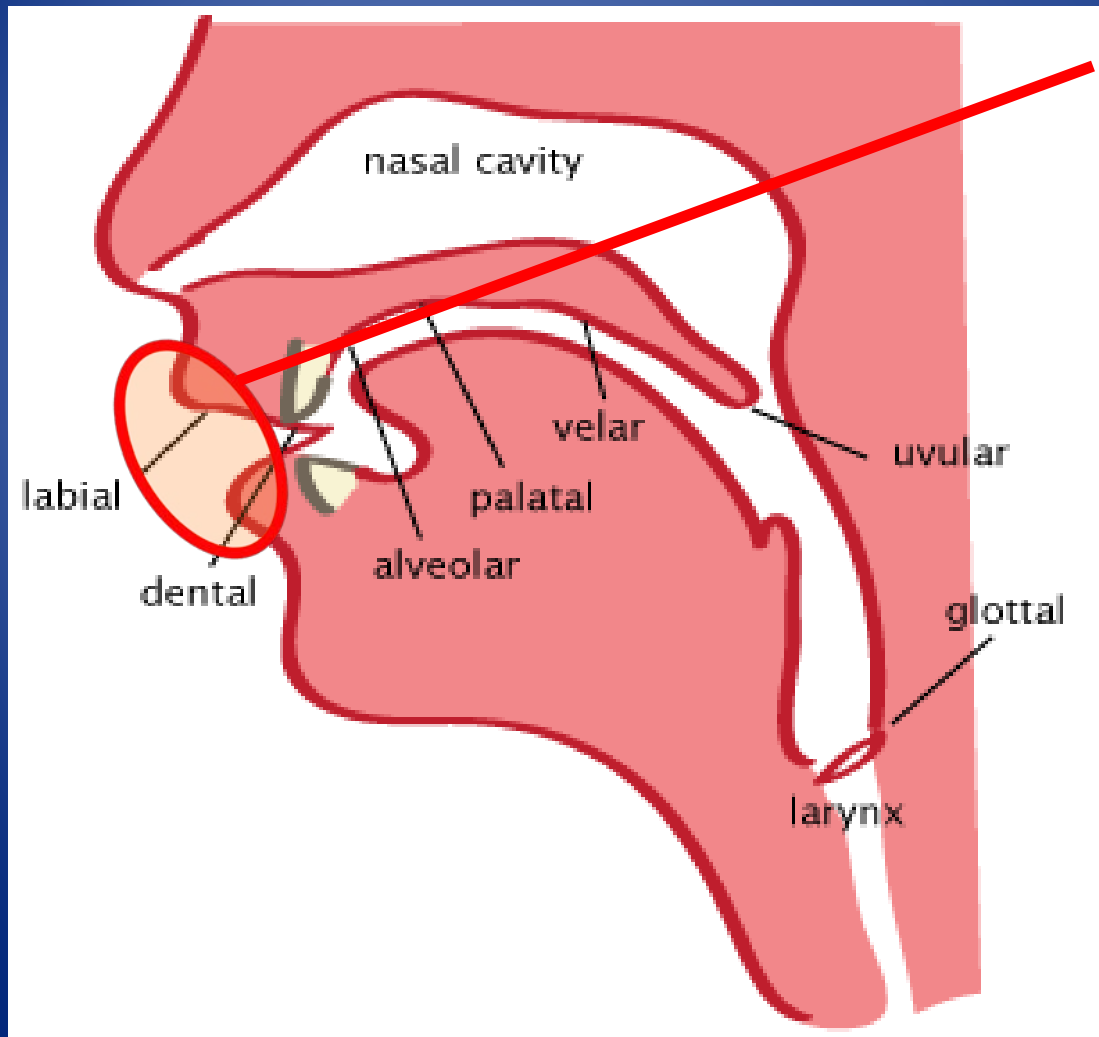
tavagga

ta, tha, da, dha, na

- tongue touching front teeth

Labials 唇音 (otṭhaja)

p, ph, b, bh, m, u, ū



Labials are pronounced mainly by **closing or partly closing the lips**

Combined Places of Articulation

Letter	Places of Articulation
e	guttural & palatal
o	guttural & labial
v	dental & labial
ṁ	• merely a nasal breathing found only after short vowels, e.g. rathamṁ, maṇimṁ, yāguṁ • can be represented as ṁ or ṃ

Division by Place of Articulation

Place of articulation 发音部位 (<i>ṭhāna</i>)	Letters
Gutturals 喉音 (<i>kaṇṭhaja</i>)	k, kh, g, gh, ṅ, h, a, ā
Palatals 口盖音 (<i>tāluja</i>)	c, ch, j, jh, ñ, y, i, ī
Cerebrals 反舌音 (<i>muddhaja</i>)	ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ, r, ḷ
Dentals 齿音 (<i>dantaja</i>)	t, th, d, dh, n, l, s
Labials 唇音 (<i>oṭṭhaja</i>)	p, ph, b, bh, m, v, u, ū
Combination	e, o, v, ṁ

Division by Manner of Articulation

Manner of Articulation

Non-Aspirated (sithila)

- Pronounced without a strong breathing or h-sound
- Accompanied by a much weaker breath-pulse than any English consonants

Aspirated (dhanita)

- Pronounced with a strong breath or h-sound added to them
- Accompanied by a strong breath-pulse from the chest, as when uttering very emphatically

Manner of Articulation 发音方式

	N-Asp <i>sithila</i> 无气	Asp <i>dhanita</i> 送气	N-Asp <i>sithila</i> 无气	Asp <i>dhanita</i> 送气	Nasal <i>nāsika</i> 鼻音
Gutturals 喉音	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ
Palatals 口盖音	c	ch	j	jh	ñ
Cerebrals 反舌音	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ
Dentals 齿音	t	th	d	dh	n
Labials 唇音	p	ph	b	bh	m

Place of articulation (<i>ṭhāna</i>)	Manner of articulation (<i>payatana</i>)										
	Consonants (<i>vyañjana</i>)							Vowels (<i>sara</i>)			Pure Nasal (<i>niggahīta</i>) [nasal only, i.e. no release in the mouth, <i>avivaṭena mukhena</i>]
	Stops (<i>phuṭṭha</i> or <i>vagga</i>)					Semi-vowel (<i>isaka phuṭṭha</i>) [voiced (<i>ghosa-vant</i>)]	Sibilant (<i>sakāra</i>) [voiceless (<i>aghosa</i>)]	Short (<i>rassa</i>)	Long (<i>dīgha</i>)	Compound (<i>asamāna</i>)	
	voiceless (<i>aghosa</i>) non-aspirate (<i>sithila</i>)	voiceless (<i>aghosa</i>) aspirate (<i>dhanita</i>)	voiced (<i>ghosa-vant</i>) non-aspirate (<i>sithila</i>)	voiced (<i>ghosa-vant</i>) aspirate (<i>dhanita</i>)	voiced (<i>ghosa-vant</i>) nasal (<i>nāsika</i>)						
Gutturals (<i>kaṇṭhaja</i>)	<i>k</i>	<i>kh</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>gh</i>	<i>ṅ</i>	<i>h</i>		<i>a</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ṁ</i>
Palatals (<i>tāluja</i>)	<i>c</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>jh</i>	<i>ñ</i>	<i>y</i>		<i>i</i>	<i>ī</i>		
Cerebrals (<i>muddhaja</i>)	<i>ṭ</i>	<i>ṭh</i>	<i>ḍ</i>	<i>ḍh</i>	<i>ṇ</i>	<i>r, ḷ</i>					
Dentals (<i>dantaja</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>dh</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>s</i>			<i>o</i>	
Labials (<i>oṭṭhaja</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>bh</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>v</i>		<i>u</i>	<i>ū</i>		

Practice

Pronunciation of Consonants

ka-group (<i>kavagga</i>)	Gutturals <i>kaṇṭhaja</i>	k, kh, g, gh, ṅ
ca-group (<i>cavagga</i>)	Palatals <i>tāluja</i>	c, ch, j, jh, ñ
ṭa-group (<i>ṭavagga</i>)	Cerebrals <i>muddhaja</i>	ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ
ta-group (<i>tavagga</i>)	Dentals <i>dantaja</i>	t, th, d, dh, n
pa-group (<i>pavagga</i>)	Labials <i>oṭṭhaja</i>	p, ph, b, bh, m
non-grouped (<i>avagga</i>)		y, r, l, v, s, h, ḷ
pure Nasal (<i>niggahīta</i>)		ṁ

Special Notes: ṇ

“ṇ” in the book “The New Pali Course” can be replaced by “ṁ”

- Usually written as ṁ
- Pronounce as “ang”
- Always follows a short vowel
- The pure nasal is the humming sound produced when mouth is closed but air escapes through the nose with voicing (vibration of the vocal chords)
- It is the m without release

Some Pronunciation Rules

Double or conjunct consonants

For double or conjunct consonants in the middle of a word:

- both consonants must be pronounced
- the **first consonant** is pronounced together with the **preceding syllable**, while the **second consonant** is pronounced together with the **subsequent syllable**

e.g. **Buddham**, **Dhammam**, **Sangham**

Special Note: a

Pronunciation of “a”

- At Beginning Syllable of word : **mouth open**
- In the Middle or End Syllable : **mouth close**

namo
open

tassa
open|close
“ser”

bhagavato
open|close|close
“ger” “ver”

Special Note: a

Special Cases:

1. **a** is n front of **m** : mouth open

→ *Buddham*
open

2. In compound words, like *pavagga*

- *pavagga* = *pa* + *vagga*

→ *Pavagga*
open|open|close

- *Jetavane* = *Jet* + *vane*

→ *Jetavane*
close|open

“a” here is in
the first syllable
of 2nd word

Special Note: a

Special Cases:

3. Generally, in front of **double** or **conjunct** consonant: **mouth open**

→ *dīpañkara*

→ *kataññutā*

→ *kadamavaṇṇassa*

4. For single-syllable word: **close mouth**

→ *ca, na*

Practice

Vandanā

- Namō tassa Bhagavato
Arahato
Sammāsambuddhassa

Ti-Sarana

- Buddhamaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi
- Dhammaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi
- Saṅghaṃ Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi
- Dutiyam'pi...
- Tatiyam'pi...

Pañcasīla

- Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
- Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
- Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
- Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
- Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

Colour Guide

a – open mouth

a – close mouth

a – open mouth following special rule
(compound words), like Jetavane,
sikkhāpadaṃ

a – open mouth not following any rule,
like veramaṇī, aññatarā

Mahāmaṅgalasuttaṃ

Evam me sutam: ekam samayaṃ bhagavā
Sāvattiyaṃ viharati Jetavana anāthapiṇḍikassa
ārāme.

Atha kho aññatarā devatā abhikkantāya rattiya,
abhikkantavaṇṇā, kevalakappaṃ Jetavanaṃ
obhāsetvā

yena bhagavā ten'upasaṅkami, upasaṅkamtivā
bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ aṭṭhāsi.

Ekamantaṃ ṭhitā kho sā devatā bhagavantaṃ
gāthāya

ajjhabhāsi:-

Mahāmaṅgalasuttaṃ

Bahū devā maṇussā ca,
maṅgalāni acintayum,
ākaṅkhamānā sothānaṃ,
brūhi maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Asevanā ca bālānaṃ,
paṇḍitānañca sevanā,
pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Mahāmaṅgalasuttaṃ

Patirūpadesavāso ca,
pubbe ca katapuññatā,
attasammāpaṇīdhi ca,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Bāhusaccañca sippañca,
vinayo ca susikkhito,
subhāsitā ca yā vācā,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Mahāmaṅgalasuttaṃ

Mātāpitu upaṭṭhānaṃ,
puttadārassa saṅgaho,
anākulā ca kammantā,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Dānañca dhammacariyā ca,
ñātakānañca saṅgaho,
anavajjāni kammāni,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Mahāmaṅgalasuttaṃ

Ārati virati pāpā,
majjapānā ca saññāmo,
appamādo ca dhammesu,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Gāraṇaṃ ca nivāto ca,
santuṭṭhi ca kataññutā,
kālena dhammasaṃvaṇaṃ,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Mahāmaṅgalasuttaṃ

Khantī ca sovacassatā,
samaṇānañca dassanaṃ,
kālena dhammasākacchā,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Tapo ca brahmacariyañca,
ariyasaccānadassanaṃ,
nibbānasacchikiriyā ca,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Mahāmaṅgalasuttaṃ

Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi,
cittaṃ yassa na kampati,
asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ,
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

Etādisāni katvāna,
sabbatthamaparājitā,
sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti,
taṃ tesaṃ maṅgalamuttaman'ti.